Indian Author

Quarterly Journal of
Authors Guild of India

EMERGENCY LITERATURE
Narendra Kumar

MARGINAL WRITING
G S Khosla

SHAH ABDUL LATIF
N J Merani

GORE VIDAL: KALKI
Book Review

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EDITORIAL

The AGI would like to explore the possibility of promoting a Books of the Month Club on a viable basis.

On another page in this issue we carry a blueprint for such a Books of the Month Club in outline.

This is only a tentative scheme and we would like our members to apply their minds to the problem of promoting such a Books of the Month Club.

Governmental efforts to promote the book reading habit among the public in India have not been notably successful because of various reasons into which we need not go here.

There have been attempts at promoting book clubs especially in the language regions.

But both in English publication and language publication such book clubs have been promoted by the publishers themselves and are therefore limited in scope, confined to the books that the publishers themselves publish.

Some of the regional and English Book Clubs have been successes, no doubt commercially.

It is not only the number of books that are bought and read that is important; the quality of the books bought is also important.

While the appearance of bestsellers in India is to be welcomed since it promotes the habit of reading, bestsellers tend to be cheap literature because they tend to serve the lowest common average of intelligence and interest available in the country.

A private nonprofitmaking Book Club run by a body like the AGI might make efforts to include quality reading for the masses—

suggest titles, critically evaluate them for readers and supply them month after month so that discriminating readers might be in possession of a library of Indian literature covering various fields—physical and social sciences, the humanities, arts and literature.

A national movement for more reading and better reading is on the cards nationally at least in the fourth decade of independence in India.

If the Book Club could promise a first print order of three thousand to five thousand copies for worth while books publishers would, it is expected, cooperate willingly with the Book Club for mutual profit.

As the blueprint envisages, it might take anything between three to five years to have a membership of three to five thousand dedicated readers of books in the first instance in English.

With subsidies of the kind advocated, it might be possible to become a viable organisation with an initial five hundred members.

The AGI will be represented by 21 founding members who will manage the finances and the critical choices of the Book Club in the first instanae.

The management of the Book Club and the critics who recommend books will be drawn from the AGI for the first ten years after which the Book Club will be totally independent of the parent body.

How best to work this scheme to the greatest advantage of those connected with the writing of books and the sale and publication of them is the reason for circularising such a blueprint in a tentative form for consideration among members.

Members' suggestions either criticising the scheme or adding such points as strike the members as valid in this context are invited and will be given due consideration in the final shape that the Book Club might take.

We can discuss it at the National Convention at Trivandrum; but your suggestions in writing would be most welcome and helpful.

News & Notes

Trivandrum Convention:

In the last three days of the year the fifth national Convention of AGI will be held in Trivandrum, one of the most attractive of the cities of India. For writers who have not had a chance to visit Kerala and partake of its hospitality and riches this is a good opportunity.

Kerala has many distinctions. It is modern and at the same time it preserves its traditions in good array. The Communists who pride themselves on being Progressives have had a foothold in Kerala ever since the formation of the State. Though one of the smaller states of India it has the largest literacy rate in India. Its authors are among some of the bestknown in India. Next only to Bengal, Malayalam writing has been in the vangurad of the Indian literary and artistic renaissance. The number of translations from Malayalam available to the reader in English are many and numerically almost as strong as that of translations from Bengali. And above all it has the only literary cooperative society which has made a success of the publishing industry and has contribtued to the amelioration of author-publisher relations. Members of the AGI who participate in the Convention should make it an opportunity of knowing at first hand some of the outstanding current works of the contemporary writers of Malayalam.

The Convention will be discussing various literary topics of interest to Indian writers. In view of the fact that authors are assembling in Kerala the emphasis will be on Malayalam writing and culture naturally. In view of the fact that UNESCO has declared the forthcoming year as Childrens Year our discussions will encompass the writing that is necessary for children and which is if not the most neglected part of current Indian writing the most misunderstood and the least effective. In view of the Kerala Coop in publishing the Convention should emphasise the rights of authors—better royalties and amenities for research and living for writers.

The Convention will be presided over by Dr Shivaram Karanth who is one of the most effective of writers in Kanada who however does not swear by writing alone.

Jyanpith award:

Karanth is the winner of this

year's prestigious Jyanpith award for a recent novel of his. His traditional outlook notwithstanding his novels and stories have modern validity in a sense which most traditionalists may not be able to manage. His Whispering Earth earlier translated as Back to the Soil is one for the 10 or 20 most outstanding novels of India.

Karanth's services to folk arts and public life—he in addition to his literary and yakshagana activities conducts a school and is very much interested in the public affairs of his region and country—make him a fuller man than most writers can afford to be in India. The authors assembling in Trivandrum will look forward to his inspiring presence as man and writer and renew their acquaintance with him or make his acquaintance a-new and will be the richer for it.

Leo Tolstoy: 1828-1910

The one hundred and fiftieth birth anniversary of Leo Tolstoy generally known even to new readers in India as the Guru of Mahatma Gandhi in his early stages—he called his farm Tolstoy Farm in Africa in 1909 has been celebrated in India with more than the usual eclat by a number of articles and essays on various aspects of his life and writings.

Tolstoy the humanist thinker of course is what is presented more easily than his complex personality as a writer. As fabulist, fictionist, dramatist and thinker he achieved early distinction and held the attention of the world for more tham half a centtury while he lived to old age. He wrote perhaps what will be considered the one most outstanding novel of all the world for another century at least in his War and Peace; he capped it with another equally good in his Anna Karenina. More than the man it is the writer that holds the attention of future generations though his tortured humanist heart afire at the injustice surrounding him would be also an inspiration for the next century at least if not longer.

Standing out in a company of immortals the like of which in number and quality had not occurred before anywhere in Europe in the nineteenth century—he was one of the tallest figures in a group of tall men like Ivan Turgenev Fyodor Dosteovski, Nikolai Gogol, Anton Chekhov, Maxim Gorki—Tolstoy is a name which will inspire lovers of literature and life in generations to come. One would wish that more translations and critical studies about Tolstoy will be promoted in the year of his 150th Birth anniversary.

Henryk Ibsen: 1828-1906

While you can trust the Socialist countries to take ample care of the anniversaries of their great men it is symptomatic that the one hundred and fiftieth birth anniversary of Henryk Ibsen passed almost unnoticed in India. In his own way a tortured soul and a lover of humanity and human values

Ibsen was a genius in handling the drama and made the modern outlook on plays and play writing possible. His earlier social plays advocating the new women and the removal of social abuses were popular for decades though his greatest contribution to drama is his poetry which he clothed in a heartening symbolism in his later plays. His influence on Shaw in his earlier period was great as it was on Eugene O'Neill. Ibsen can still teach a lesson or two to modern aspirants to playwriting in India. But plays and drama generally are subject to fashions and to talk of Henryk Ibsen may not be very popular these days though modern drama might well have been impossible without him and his contributions.

Voltaire (1694-1778)
Rousseau (1712-1778)

Two French writers of the French Age of Enlightenment who made modern revolutions possible were Rousseau and Voltaire associated together though their lifelong quarrels about ideas were often violent and enlightened quite a few of their listeners and readers The bicentenary of their deaths—they died two hundred years ago in the same year 1778 has passed almost unnoticed in India. They together contributed to the political thought both of their days and subsequent decades and centuries and the slogan of Equality, Fraternity and Liberty which inspired the French and other sibsequent Revolutions are attributed to them.

Of the two Rousseau should be dear to Indian readers especially because he was one of the founders of the romantic movement in Europe, a movement which has influenced Indian writing and from which Indian writing is still not free. Rousseau's Confessions are the source of much of the romantic ideals which have prevailed in German, French, English and other regions for well over a century.

Both Rousseau and Voltaire contributed to ideas in education and on civilisation and social organisation that have not been thrown off even today. We today may not subscribe to all their theories but they in fact initiated a discussion that has been fruitful in many ways. Indians can profit by serious discussion of the ideas of Rousseau and Voltaire in their present context and situation.

[By some editorial oversight the following preliminary remarks of Mr. Hugh Gantzer to the cyclostyled text of his paper on Earning a Living by Writing in India was left out in INDIAN AUTHOR (Vol III: No. 2.) These remarks were made extempore on the occasion].

Introductory remarks

I am speaking in an Indian language. It is the language that my family has spoken for two and a half centuries in India.

Yesterday I heard a remarkable statement made in this august, and presumably liberal, body. One of my fellow authors said. "English is not the language of Indian soil. It was bequeathed to us by prolonged foreign rule."

Very well, Very well!

But then if that is our considered view then let us remember that Hindi is a language derived from the tongue of the Aryan invaders; in all likelihood it displaced the Tamil tongue spoken by the Indus Valley civilization.

Tamil, itself, replaced the language of the proto-Australoids, now spoken only by some tribals in the South.

And the language of the proto-Aistraloids, in its time, had suppressed the first historic tongue of India, the little-heard language of the Negritos. So, if you are really determined to speak the true language of the soil, I suggest you retire to the jungles of the Andamans and converse with the head-hunting Jarawas.

In my view, every language that even a single Indian calls his mother tongue is an Indian language.

And let us have no more narrow minded, short-sighted chauvinistic quibbles about it.

Hugh Gantzer

BOOK REVIEW

GORE VIDAL: KALKI: A NOVEL

Allied Publishers, Bombay. Pp. 244. Rs. 20/- Ind. Ed.

Gore Vidal is an American novelist with a considerable reputation and a large variety in his output. War experiences, political satire, ironic commentary of world affairs as they are conducted in the US and in the larger world have been grist to his literary mill. A man of ideas with a forceful expression and a bent for satire, he is one of the most powerful writers of novels to emerge in the US even if technically he belongs to the school of the well made novel.

Born in 1925 he wrote his first novel Williwa in 1946 when he was just twenty one, drawing from his experience of the War that was just over. The War served as the theme for his next seven novels bringing him mild acclaim: His City and the Pillar written in 1948 has the dubious distinction of being the first American novel to deal in detail with homosexuals and their world. He wrote mystery novels under the psevdonym Edgar Box with modest success. His collection of short stories were collected in 1956 under the title A Thirsty Evil. He ran for Congress as a democrat in 1960 getting 25000 votes more than J F Kennedy but failing to win a seat. He wrote a neat play The Best Man (1960), an excellent series of critical essays in Rocking the Boat (1962). In the late fifties and early sixties he revised some of his earlier novels altering them considerably. He wrote a few T V plays and one play which achieved a Broadway success.

His Julian appeared in 1964 and was hailed immediately as a major tour de force in American writing. The career of the apostate nephew of the Emperor Contantine the Great was the theme of the novel handled with brilliance and historic insight; it was erudite and at the same time so entertainingly physical.

This was followed by Washington D C in 1967 which makes a target of the corridor men of American power, the manipulations of a press lord and the game of the presidential elections. Gore Vidal in the next few novels was able to fully portray his disgust at the immoral procedures of government and the moral poverty of the personalities who evidently control the world of today—a theme which he was to pursue with varied and interesting impressiveness in later masterpieces

like Burr, Myra Breckenridge, 1876 and others.

His sixteenth novel and latest KALKI pursues the same theme on a larger scale and explicates the theme of the end of the world—the natural finish of a world of doomed men by an artificial means, thriller like but nevertheless very poignanlty pictured. The Hindu idea of the deterioration of humankind through succeeding three ages into the age of Kali is handled with superb convincing skill. While other Americans have been concerned with trascendental, mystical, yogic and other truths that Hinduism might or might not successfully portray, Gore Vidal has adapted the puranic symbolism in a powerful manner to suit his text. An Indian should and could have done this novel; but an American had to do it and as his dedication indidates he comes to the theme and the idea from a writer in Thailand and not through any Indian.

An American G I with a gift for chemistry who has found himself used by the U S army authorities in spreading virus war in the Viet Cong evolves the idea of using the virus game for ending this most unsatisfactory world and rebegin it by planning the survival of a beloved of his—Denis Panikker—and three others two women and a man who cannot produce children having undergone an operation after mother hood and fatherhood. Vishnu (American G I originally named Kelly) and Lakshmi are lovable characters unlike the villains of thrillers. Lakshmi knows what is happening but Vishnu is Lord and his word is law. Naturally to finance the empire that the American G I Vishnu builds up as preliminary to the end of the world much money is needed and he makes use of the drug ring for his own purposes. He ropes in an aviatrix who has a penchant for intellectuality and writing and it is this woman who has had two children has divorced and cannot produce any more children who is roped in for flying the the Guru of the teaching of the end of the world to America and for spreading the virus unknowingly as the crucial moment by crisscrossing a plane all over the world and dropping paper lotuses all over the place annihilating humankind at a predetermined time.

The aviatrix has a mind of her own but she is roped in and fascinated. She confronts Vishnu with the drug investigations but innocently Vishnu asked her "What else would give me the money for my seheme for the end of the world and a new beginning with hopes of humanity?". She gets the full information about the scheme only after all the crucial things have happened and she is helpless though feeling guilty.

One puranic detail might be of interest to Indian readers. Vishnu is the preserving deity of the Hindu trinity and if he wants to destroy the world he has to transform himself into Siva the destroyer. This transformation is the climax in the

[Cont'd Page 45]

The Trivandrum Session of Authors Convention

D. R. MANKEKAR

Dear Member,

Preparations are in full swing for the convening of the Fifth National Convention of Indian Authors scheduled to be held from 29th to 31st December 1978 (i. e. Friday, Saturday and Sunday) in the beautiful city of Trivandrum, in that land of lagoons and palms, the state of Kerala. The first convention to be held outside Delhi promises to be a historic occasion as well as a memorable tourist event.

Our colleagues from Kerala, who extended the invitation to AGI two years ago to hold the Convention in their capital are leaving no stone unturned to ensure that the Convention will be a success and that outstation members participating in the Convention are adequately looked after.

AGI boasts of 34 members from Kerala, one of the largest regional contingents outside of Delhi. They have already appointed a Reception Committee to attend to the organisation of the Convention and to make arrangements for boarding and lodging of outstation members attending the Convention. Nor are they according to reports I have received, neglecting the cultural, tourist and recreational side of the programme.

Applicants' Rush

Within ten days of the issue of the circular announcing the holding of the Fifth National Convention of Indian Authors in Kerala, the Secretariat of AGI has been snowed under with letters and telegrams from members desiring to attend the Trivandrum session and to be registered for the TA/DA facility. The number of applicants who have already registered their names has exceeded 150 numbers. We have applied for a substantial grant from the Government, and personal efforts will be made at the Education Ministry to ensure an adequate grant in view of the very large number of applicants and the long distance involved and the consequent higher first-class rail fare to Trivandrum to be paid. We hope the Education Ministry will oblige us in this matter. As in the past, those attending the Convention have to has a registration fee of Rs. 15/- only; those members who have paid their annual Subscriptions upto date are eligible to attend the Convention.

Every effort is being made by the Executive Committee to ensure a fair and just distribution of the TA/DA facilities to members who have registered their names. But as members

would realise, now that AGI's strength has exceeded 400, it may not be practicable for the Government to give a grant large enough to meet the TA/DA facility to all the members. Therefore, those who applied late may have to face disappointment even though every effort will be made by the AGI secretariat to accommodate as many as possible.

The Programme

The programme of the Trivandrum Session will consist of:

Friday, the 29th December 1978—Annual General Body meeting of AGI.

Saturday, the 30th December 1978—inaugural session, followed by business sessions.

Sunday, the 31st December 1978—more business sessions, including a valedictory plenary session.

Appropriately, the Kerala session of the convention will devote special attention to a discussion on Malayalam literature and its achievements and role in Kerala's intellectual, social and political life.

Details of the agenda are now being worked out and the full programme of the agenda will be circularised to members as soon at it is ready.

Dr. Shivaram Karanth, the the renowned Kannada writer and recipient of the Gnanpith Award for 1978, will preside over the Kerala session.

It has to be noted that the daily allowance facility of Rs. 50/- per day, under Government rules, applies only to the two days of the Authors' Convention and does not apply to the first day when the General Body meeting of AGI will be held.

Invitations have been extended to authors' organisations in Australia, Britain, USSR, USA; Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Shri Lanka. We hope at least some of these institutions will respond to our invitation. On the last three occasions Nepali and Australian authors were represented.

Members are invited to suggest subjects for inclusion in in the Agenda. We have already received quite a few.

Rich as Kerala is in its cultural life, we look forward to high class entertainment programmes for the sessions apart from visits to Kanya Kumari and Kovalam beach, etc.

AGI's Publishing Coop

I am happy to announce that the AGI Publishing Co-operative has got off the ground with the issue of its first publication—an anthology (English) of Tamil short stories. The anthology should be available for sale by the time this issue of INDIAN AUTHOR goes to press. The Tamil short stories will be followed by the publication of other anthologies of short stories in other major Indian languages.

"Indian Author"

Our exhortation to members to take more interest in 'Indian Author' by contributing article and letters to the Editor, discussing authors' professional, economic and literary problems, has hitherto received poor response. We once again urge upon members to take active interest in the production of INDIAN AUTHOR.

We frequently suffer from lack of interesting material to fill the pages of the journal. And yet there is so much to discuss and talk about amongst our members in regard to many subjects such as our relations with publishers and royalty and copyright problems and literary issues.

There are so many matters on which we could exchange notes and experiences to mutual benefit and thereby make our journal more interesting reading.

Yours truly.

D. R. M.

Order, Cause and Chance in Religion and Scicnce

John Pulparampil

There are three concepts which have revolutionised science during the 16th and the 17th centuries; they are Order, Cause, and Chance, wrote Dr. J. Bronowski two decades ago. But were not Order, Cause, and Chance concepts of a perennial concern for mankind?

In man's intellectual history, systematic thinking began with man's attempt at establishing and explaining Order, Cause, and Chance as these were experienced in day to-day life. Thus, from ancient days onwards to our own times, all religious philosophies thrived on these very concepts; Order, Cause, and Chanee were sought to be explained in terms of an interference by God with the the working of nature. This attempt at establishing and explaining Order, Cause, and Chance with reference to a God was most prominent and highly successful in the hands of Christian philosophers and theologicians. who invented the concepts of *divine creation divine providence*, and *divine will* to explain all that they experienced and all what they could think of through their uncontrolled imagination. And these men found an array of metaphysical assumptions in the Biblical Statements to be adduced as evidences for "proving" their arguments. In fact, no thinkers in human history have played the "game of assumptions" as superbly well as the schoolmen or scholastics of the Church during the hey day of Christian philosophy during the Middle Ages.

While these men sought to explain Cause through the concept of divine creation, and order through the concept of divine providence, it was the concept of divine will that they found most suitable to explain the phenomenon of chance in the universe: everything happens, whether caused in an orderly way or as chance events in a haphazard way, according to the will of God, who, as the creator and supreme master or the universe, has the right to will and do everything as he pleases. There were schoolmen who

could spend hours in raptuorus silence meditating over the *voluntas Dei suavis*. (Some of the present day political God heads may well envy the situation, and wish to have followers who would enjoy such meditations about the sweet will of their masters).

But neither with the dead schoolmen nor with their dying God did death occur to the concepts of Order, Cause, and Chance. As rightly observed by Dr. Bronowski, the revolutionising of modern science has taken place precisely because of these concepts. The scientists of the modern era, beginning with the middle 16th century onwards, could not only dispense with the much cherished concepts of the schoolmen, viz., divine creation, divine providence, and divine will, but also could systematically and in empirical terms account for Order, Cause, andC hance in the universe to a degree that has never been achieved before. While concepts like evolution and system have been found most useful by the modern scientists to explain the phenomenon of order, scores of theories of dynamics, effects and reactions have been found equally useful for explaining the phenomenon of causation. While chances may continue as puzzles to be solved, when not adequately explained in terms of empirica evidence, even they get dissolved into the realm of explained or explainable phenomena whenever sufficient cause-effect relations are discovered by relentless experimentalists.

Conceding that both men of religion and men of science are equally concerned with the Cause, Order, and Chance, one should not fail to note the everlasting difference between the two tribes of men. While the former, viz. men of religion, employ the concepts of Order, Cause, and Chance in their game of assumptions—assumptions they borrow from books or scriptures they consider as "sacred',, "inspired" etc., or from men whom they regard as divine—the latter viz., men of science, use the very concepts to explain events and experiences in the light of empirical evidence, While the path of the latter consists of a three fold step involving observation, evidence and deduction (OED), the path of the former is constituted by faith in assumptions or men, deduction of arguments to explain events and experiences in line with their faith, and an ultimate enveloping of the world with the bundle of assumptions they believe in (FDE).

What happens to the world when dealt with by the men of religion and men of science too is important to take note of. When the religious men, by enveloping the world with the mantle strewn of their fictitious assumptions mystify it, their scientific counterparts, by unveiling the mysteries of nature and by explaining the events and experiences of life, demystify the world, and make it more and more understandable and explainable in terms of factual cause-effect relations, In effect, religion implies a mystification of the world, where as science calls for a de-mystification of it. Hence one's inclination to call religion mystification, science demystification.

And what about man himself? For the religious tribe, man cannot and should not be defined in himself, without reference to a divine. Only when man is defined in reference to a God-either as created by God or as an emanation of God Himself—man is full, dignified and meaningful. But how deceitful is their effort at impoverishing man, by making him an appendix of a God whom they created in their own image and want to extol to unimaginable heights. In contrast, men of science, by defining man with reference to himself and in terms of whatever elements, that nature has contributed to his evolution, present a truly full, dignified, and meaningful definition of man, without robbing him to enrich an otherwise empty God. Man,who becomes impoverished and exploited in the hands of the religious men who rob him to enrich their God, attains his full stature in the hands of the men of science who not only define man in himself, as he is, but also search out ways and means for his further growth and development.

BLUE PRINT FOR A BOOKS-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB

To promote the bookbuying and reading habits among the general public in India the Authors Guild of India would like to sponsor a Books-of-the Month Club. It is estimated that a minimum of 500 members tostart with will be necessary to help the Book Club function initially. It might take a minimum of 5000 members to make it perform successfully and profitably and it is estimated hopefully that between three and years of beginning to function the Book Club can achieve a 5000 membership.

The Book Club will be a nonprofitmaking organisation. Its offcers will be honorary, entitled to such honorariums as might be initially decided, and later increased as feasible.

The Book Club will initially at least till it achieves a membership of 5000 deal only with English publications choosing three every month out of which members should buy at least two compulsorily. The three books will be chosen not only on merit but also on the basis of including one book each month of creative writing, one on the humanities and one on the social or physical sciences, so that the member's libraries will have an allround character. One at leastshould be a paper cover book.

To begin with such books as are chosen will be bought unbound in sheets from the publishers at the maximum of discount of not less than two hundred copies each, bound in uniform bindings specially for the Book Club and offered at a price to members that will be at least twentyfive to ninty percent cheaper than the publisher's price. The addition to the cost of the book on buying prices and binding charges shall not be more than five per cent. Members should be offered the books post free, postage being included in the costs.

The Book Club will give advance information andencourage advance payment.

For sustaining the establishment members would be requested to pay an annual subscription of Rs, 10/-. and an entrance fee of Rs. 10/- The entrance fee will not be refundable and the fee of Rs. 10/- should be renewable annually. The Establishment will consist of a Managing Director whose honorarium will be fixed at Rs. 500/ a month for the first three years to be reviewed at the end of the three year period. The Managing Director shall officiate for ten years to be renewable for the smooth working of the Book Club without changes in policy once

fixed. An editorial committee for screening the books will consist of the Managing Director and three members drawn from the creative writing and humanities and social sciences groups. The Editorial committee will hold office for three years to begin with and renewed suitably every three years. The members of the editorial committee will draw a minimum honorarium of Rs. 200/- every month as long as they are active, reading and recommending books.

The office of the Book Club should be situated in a place which will accommodate and provide for stocking stocks of books and shall consist of a part names Manager, a clerk and a boy-a skeleton staff to begin with. Till such time as the Book Club works sucessfully that is till we have a membership of five thousand, the honorariums to the Managing Director, editorial directors, the salaries of the manager, clerk, peon, rent, stationery, and the setting up of an office should be subsidised. Such subsidy should be guaranteed for the first three years with the provision of renewing it for another two years if the project does not accomplish five thousand membership in the first three years The amount of the subsidy will work out to roughly Rs. 60000 per year.

The Book Club will be a registered body with twentyfive founder members who will have the control of the finances and the working of the Club. And will be numbers the AGI Founder members may be those who initially to pay a subscription say Rs. 50/-. If the Book Club at any time shows profits they will be used for buying books for Members and distributing them as free bonuses once in six months or a year as the case may be. The negotiations with the publishers can begin only after the Book Club comes into existence—it will simultaneously begin negotiating for books and for launching a membership campaign and can begin working only when the first five hundred members are enrolled.

The possibility of extending the Book Club activities to other languages than English exist and will depend on our being able to enrol at least five to ten hnndred members in each language. A member for one language group should have concessions if he enrols for another language group as well. The success of the Book Club will depend on the larger number of members we are able to enrol and on the rockbottom prices we can give to books that are available on the market.

To supplement and clear away stocks which might accumulate the Book Club at least in the initial stages will have to act as a mail-order-bookseller business as well within certain limits. In carrying out mail order supply of books the Book Club shall charge postage and shall not fix the prices at the bottom level that will be

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Once upon a time . . .

The Grimm Brothers

Often they are recognizable from the very first line—the fairy tales by the Grimm brothers. "Once upon a time" is how nearly all of them begin, those weird and wondrous stories of Red Riding-Hood and Snow White, of the Frog King and Rumpelstiltskin, of Hansel and Gretel and the wicked witch in her gingerbread house, of the Hungry Wolf and Sleeping Beauty whom Prince Charming's kiss awakens from a thousand years of slumber—to the delight of millions of children all over the world. For these "falsified remnants of the wishful phantasies of whole nations" (Sigmund Freud), collected and written down by Jacob (1785—1863) and Wilhelm (1786—1859) Grimm, are nowadays more famous nationally and internationally than any other book in the German language. Grimm's fairy tales for children and for the family have since been translated into over seventy languages.

These tales of wonder from Germany were already popular during the lifetime of the Grimm brothers. In 1857 alone there were seventeen different editions comprising two million copies. As from 1816, they were translated into Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Dutch, English, French, Magyar, Russian—and even Armenian.

This success may well have seemed like a fairy-tale to the Grimms themselves; they were, after all, not literary geniuses, but academics: philologists, experts on sound-shifts and grammar, modest (and often badly paid) librarians in Kassel, and later learned professors in Gottingen and Berlin. The conception was, accordingly, not that of a world best-seller, but rather one of an assignment in scholarly compilation—a piece of research designed to prove "that fairy tales characterize the individual poetic notions and attitudes of a people." It was admittedly not all a matter of dry research, for both Jacob Grimm, the more practical of the brothers, and Wilhelm Grimm, the more aesthetically inclined of the two, were fascinated at an early age by Romantic poetry and by the landscape of their native Hesse. For six years the Grimm brothers listened to the stories told them by poets and clergymen,

by teachers and peasant women, by a retired sergeant of the dragoons—and by the Kassel apothecary's daughter named Dortchen who was later to become Wilhelm Grimm's wife

There had of course been collections of fairy tales before those of the Grimm brothers. But most of these were falsified by excessive embellishment and were too far removed from the verbal tradition. "We have been at pains to preserve the purest possible conception of these stories," was the Grimm brother's very different approach.

It was not everywhere that the fairy tales received such a warm welcome as in London, where these wondrous adventures from Germany went through no fewer than three editions in a year. In Vienna, for instance, the book was banned for encouraging superstition. Scholars are still divided over the value of these stories. Moreover, they also voice doubts concerning the origin of the "wishful phantasies." As long ago as 1855 a Germanics scholar named Rolf Hagen discovered remarkable affinities between some of the Grimms' tales and those published over a century earlier by the French story-teller Charles Perrault under the title "Histories ou Contes du Temps passe" . Possibly some of the stories are not so typically German as they seem.

As for the Grimm brothers themselves, the fairy tale collection was no doubt their favourite creation, but certainly not the most notable. They wrote far more sophisticated books—works of fundamental importance which are to this day decisive for the study of Germanics. As the *Neue Zurcher Zeitung* has put it: "The brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm mark the begining of scientific research into the German language and the other Germanic languages—of German and Germanic philology." Sometimes in collaboration, and sometimes independently, these inseparable brothers discovered the secrets of Germanic and High German sound-shifts, collected two large volumes of historical legends—not to speak of verbally communicated folk-legends, wrote commentaries on Old and Middle High German poetry, and devoted themselves to the study of linguistic history, of legal antiquities and of runic lore. Jacob Grimm's 2,000-page "Deutsche Grammatik"

went far beyond the limits of a mere grummar. "The work is to be as it were, a history of the language", was Jacob's comment on this German historical grammar.

As early as 1805, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm had decided to stay together—and they were complementary in an ideal way. On the one hand, Jacob's talent for dispassionate research; on the other, Wilhelm Grimm's pronounced poetic leanings. They hardly ever parted, one exception being the time in 1815 when Jacob Grimm attended the Vienna Congress as a Hessian Secretary of Legation. This meeting of statesmen for the reorganisation of Europe after the overthrow of Napoleon was a bitter disappointment for Jacob Grimm, who very soon extricated himself "from this tangle of crudities, conventional courtesies, intrigue, clandestinity and foolhardiness". On his second political mission, too—as a Deputy to the Frankfurt Parliament that met in 1848 to give Germany a free consitution—Jacob Grimm felt out of place "among these clamorous people at verbal loggerheads with each other". The greatest disappointment for the Grimm brothers, however, came in 1837, when King Ernest Augustus of Hanover summarily rescinded a charter of basic democratic rights that had been in force for only four years. They issued a protest together with five other Gottingen professors, and were promptly dismissed.

Disillusioned by so much injustice, the Grimm brothers now devoted themselves entirely to research. The result was the three bulky volumes of the "Deutsches Worterbuch", which, in the words of Jacob Grimm, was to "embrace from Luther to Goethe the immense wealth of our native tongue, which no one has yet realized or appraised". For the brothers' declinihg years it was a bold enterprise of exceptional magnitude, which, among other commitments, occupied eighty free lance collaborators. The Grimm brothers were not able to complete their great German dictionary, but in the course of many years the work was finished by distinguished scholars in accordance with the Grimms' design. Today, in the words of the Grimms' biographer, H. Gerstner, it is considered a "monument to the German language". The other monument, and by far the more popular, is without doubt the collection

(Contd. Page 26)

EMERGENCY LITERATURE

NARENDRA KUMAR

With the recent spate of bestselling literature on the Emergency deluging the Indian book market, a tremendous burst of publishing activity is taking place in the country, the like of which has never been experienced before.

Passing through the darkest hours of our history we have now come upon an era more dynamic and controversial than ever before: an era which has caused a near explosion of the earlier bounds of space and thought. This great energy, excitment, and vibrancy in the reading climate marks one of the most triumphant moments, and vibrancy in the book publishing industry in India—a moment in which, having outgrown our micro existences, we have truly come into our own, have truly flowered.

New Lease of Life

For, indeed, books on the Emergency have given Indian publishing a new lease of life. They have brought in badly needed stability to the publishing industry. And, for the first time. in the three decades of our publishing history, it is now possible to conceive of ourselves as major international centres of publishing, setting up powerful traditions amongst the great publishing centres of the world.

The Book as a Macro Form

At the very outset it must be pointed out, however, that the bestseller is a very powerful factor in Indian publishing today—in fact its only mainstay. The whole idea of an enormously extended print run has fundamentally changed the industry in a big way. It has established a totally new concept in communications—the con-

cept of the macro form. Emergency bestsellers, which are not an elite or group phenomenon but a mass phenomenon, have fulfilled a deeply felt sociological need to know more and more about the inner workings of a political and social structure which is essentially of our own making. Above all, this need is born out of the radical politicization of an entire nation, a very recent, very welcome, and extra-ordinary development for the people. As a result, it has succeeded in creating a vast communication and awareness base in the subcontinent. Mass communications, following their own logic, have always thrust themselves towards a larger, broader audience. And, in this case, the catalyst has been an entire process of history, i.e. General Elections in March 1977.

The Emergency Bestseller—A Response to History's Challenge

The nature of the Emergency bestseller, in its very scope and concept, has been determined by the historical situation which confronted it. The flood of writing, that swept Europe and the West in the decades following the post-Nazi era, comes readily to mind. Hitler's fascism had sharply etched the unbearable sorrow and pathos of an entire race—and an entire civilization. It was the complete shattering, a total psychic collapse, of the whole generation, including those yet unborn. Such a people, and their subsequent heroic resistance to fascism, produced the kind of classics so peculiar to the statics of the given situation. In fact, even today it is not so strange to come across a masterpiece projecting a new understanding of the Nazi regime.

As soon as one compares the mass experience of fascism in Europe with our own recent period of history, it is obvious that the latter was, in many ways, a more negative experience. To begin with there was the absence of a real and meaningful struggle against the Emergency in the country. Its ending was more a revolution by default. Such an experience, by its very nature, could not (yet) produce the post-Nazi era kind of classic.

Nevertheless, historically, our experience of the Emergency has been immensely relevant. Consequently, to see the bestseller relating to the Emergency as merely a "quickie"—as instant his-

tory or even "political pornography"—is to deny the very positive fact of a basic intellectual participation in it by large sections of the Indian population. It is to deny the overwhelming politicization of our masses.

Twenty-five years ago a book like *The Judgement* would have been an isolated "current affairs" title calling the attention of an exclusive readership. Today readers have not been involved with *The Judgement* in any academic way but, to use popular jargon, in a "street" sort of way. And why not ? It is so much the reflection of our irreverence towards politics and things political. (A very healthy sign, one should say.)

That is why the Emergency, with all its talk of civil liberties and democratic rights, has been one of the most vital topics of our day, and mass participation in Emergency writing one of the major developments in communications in India. There is herefore no question of "quarrelling" or "differing" from this phenomenon; it is a legitimate, palpable fact—and, one must add, a positive one, a step in the right direction.

The "New" Writing

However, one is obviously not equating here the bestseller with the classic. Perhaps a great classic on the Emergency will yet be written one day. What we are referring to, on the other hand, is the emergence of a kind of writing which has given an entirely new orientation to publishing in the country—mature political journalism in the form of books. This kind of writing has come in with the emergency bestseller.

The tremendous importance of this writing lies in the fact of its documentary value—and I use the world "documentary" in its fullest and most meaningful sense. Moments of history documented thus have proved of great historical, sociological and, above all, moral value. I am reminded here of one of the finest documentaries produced in Europe in the 1970s. *The Sorrow and the Pity*, a film by French film-maker Marcel Ophuls, is the story of their people under German occupation. Although official versions

in France described the country as fighting a heroic battle towards liberation, the film, according to one critic, challenges "the myth of the French as massively enrolled in or at least standing behind the resistance." The film explores "the banality of evil (in the form of Nazi terror), self-deception (of the French), the thousand ways in which people deny or repress guilt so as to preserve or restore their self-esteem." And the question it asked (which caused such restlessness in French hearts and minds) was: Under different, but not incomparable circumstances, have we behaved better? Almost as a counterpart to this is our own experience of the Emergency. It is; this is our own experience of the Emergency. It is this kind of documentary, with its conceptual parallel in the Indian Emergency, that has been of utmost relevance in almost all important moments of history.

It can be said without fear of contradiction that the new kind of publishing will have a positive and far-reaching effect on the Indian book industry.

Indicators of a Healthy Publishing Industry

For one thing, the publication of these books confirms that the tndustry has come of age. I draw this conclusion from the fact that one of the primary indicators of a healthy publishing industry is its ability to foresee and respond quickly to socio-political changes, reflecting this in the titles published. Here it is worth while to remember that even so momentous a period as led to the agony of partition and the ecstasy of freedom was virtually disregarded by Indian publishers of the time. This is because most of the prominent publishers of that era were controlled by foreign interests. Local publishers were simply too backward and lacked the vision to see the potential. As a result, the handful of contemporary accounts were brought out by British publishers and were necessarily slanted accounts.

Indeed, books on the Emergency have focused on one of the most important aspects of publishing, which is that of providing a platform for authentically recording history as it happens. For a

developing country such as ours to be in a position to do this is no mean achievement.

The publication of these books has also rendered outstanding service in creating, practically overnight, a book-reading and book-buying public in India. The bestseller was till veryr ecently hardly known in India. The new trend has exploded once and for all the myth that in India books just don't sell. It has exposed the great potential market waiting to be tapped. This revelation is bound to vastly change the nature and scope of Indian publishing.

Trail-blazing Selling Techniques

When these books were published, Indian publishers faced, for the first time, relatively stiff competition, calling into play new publicity methods. This has added another dimension to the publishing industry and we can safely bet that, in future, not only large publishers but smaller ones also, will spend a considerable amount on publicity, knowing the returns that accrue.

The large number of books on the Emergency has also given a fillip to regional language publishing, as seeing the popularity of some of the titles, regional language publishers have translated many of them into vernacular editions which too have sold in thousands.

The Author-Publisher Relations

A publishing house must have complete trust of the public and of its authors for successful functioning. Here I would like to underline that as far as professional publishing is concerned the interests of the author and the publisher are identical, and both must work closely to make a venture successful.

In fact it is with the emergency bestseller, with which have come more ideas, more talent, more people, more liveliness, more confidence and more dynamism into the publishing profession, that an entire entrepreneurial base has been created in the industry. This has resulted in a greater enriching of the already meaningful relationship between the publisher and the author. Besides the

emotional tie between them—the book—there has developed, because of the long-term stability of an economic relationship, a deeper bond of friendship. From the conceiving, discussing, and gradual shaping of a manuscript, to the programming and selling of the edited book, it is found that the best results are achieved when publisher and author have worked together through each phase of the publishing venture. Never is an author as fully satisfied as when he has behind him the strength of a meaningful relationship with his publisher; when he knows that in his publisher he has a friend.

It should specifically be mentioned here that it was and is the deep personal relationship between the authors of *Freedom at Midnight* and ourselves, which paved the way for the emergence of the finest bestseller-classics of our times. It was with *Freedom at Midnight* that sales took a quantum jump in India; from the "bestseller" of 4,000 to 5,000 copies sold, to the bestseller of over 80,000 copies sold in hardback. A long way indeed from the era of obscure classics and "brilliant" failures on the one hand, and an almost laboured kind of mediocrity on the other.

A Climate for "Larger" Books

With a faster recovery of investments, and with more revenue to plough back into publishing, the bestseller has immensely increased the capacity to subsidize esoteric and academic writings, to nurture more pure values, by creating the right climate for the emergence of the classic.

Besides, there has also come about a fantastic growth in readership. Earlier, libraries and institutions used to account for nearly 95 per cent of the sales of serious books. With the bestseller has emerged the growth of the individual buyer. With thousands of people having gone out of their homes to bookshops in order to buy a copy of *The Judgement*, available in many Indian languages apart from English, large groups of individual readership have been discovered: readers who are aware, eager, and ever hungry for more books.

Great Strides in Indian Publishing

The British took 700 years—from the days of the Magna Carta—to become the great publishing nation that they are today. It is centuries since the monasteries in Europe gradually yieded their monopoly in publishing to the universities, who yielded in turn to corporations and guids, who finally yielded to the competitive printer. And as we survey the publishing scene in the Indian subcontinent, it is with tender pride that we watch its fighting spirit, its total and absolute breaking away from the shackles of the past; and its great strides in the space of a few decades.

It has been said of our times that we are culturally evolving at a pace one hundred times faster than the biological one, and that our lives are undergoing a change based more on communications than on the gene. Let us use this rapidly evolving phenomenon of communicatications to build ourselves a new language—the language of the book.

Let us, in the name of all that is beautiful and pure in human value, use the phenomenon to build ourselves a new humanity.

ONCE UPON A TIME—*Contd. from Page 19*

of fairy tales. Besides, the expression "once upon a time" is for many of us a magic formula: for modern writers such as Gunter Grass, who has turned a fairy story into a best-seller ("Der Butt") but also for pioneers of psycho-analysis such as Freud, Jung and Adler,, who located man's subconscious wishes in the fairy realms-not forgetting the philosopher Ernst Bloch, who found out why the Grimm brothers' fairy stories are to this day so universally popular, "The fairy story narrates a wish-dream which is limited neither to a period nor to the outward trappings of its content."—Courtesy **Scala**

MARGINAL WRITING

G. S. KHOSLA

By marginal writing I do not mean writing on the margin, though most writers have of necessity to resort to it, at one time or the other. We change, correct, add to and substract from our first drafts and we could not possibly do all that without the use of the blank space on the left side of the sheet. In fact, some writers are known to leave more than half the width of a sheet blank so that they are not inhibited in their desire to modify, improve and embellish the original. In the process, they may end up with producing something quite different from what they, in the first instance, had set out to write.

Nor should marginal writing be mistaken for a pastime of the leisurely class for the simple reason that once you are bitten by the bug, you are no longer a man or a woman of leisure. The first time you see your name in print, you feel as if you have swallowed the sunshine. It is like a hound having tasted blood. Nothing can keep him out of the chase.

A marginal writer is one who has a full time vocation other than writing. That vocation claims the best part of his time and energy, yet leaving some to spare for other activities. One who uses his spare time and unspent energy in writing may be aptly described as a marginal writer. A marginal writer is certainly not the one who has to write for a living, for a writer who writes for money runs the danger of becoming a slave of schedules, sacrificing quality for quantity, becoming a craftsman and ceasing to be a creator. The great writers of India, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Sarat Chandra Chatterji, Mohammad Iqbal, Subramanya Bharati, Prem Chand, Aurobindo and Bhai Vir Singh did not write for money.

They were creative writers, whose motivation was to bring about change, social and political change, to introduce new concepts into society and to improve the quality of life. They were troubled souls, with an irrepressible urge for self-expression, for sharing their ideas with their fellow-beings. Money was the least of their motives for driving the quill. A marginal writer

shares all the concerns of these great writers, as well as their unconcern for money.

What are the problems of a marginal writer? First is to divide his time judiciously between his profession by which he earns his living and writing. As time runs its course and writing passes the stage of pastime and becomes a passion with him, the marginal writer is likely to feel a desire to combine pleasure with profit. After all, writing, apart from taking up a good deal of his time, entails spending of money on books, paper, pen, typewriter and secretarial assistance. Here is a part-time occupation which can bring him a little extra income and, though money was never his motivation for writing, yet it is not a thing to be spurned.

In my own case, I do a fair amount of translation work which undoubtedly has a pronounced monetary slant. But I regard translation as creative work and handle it like original writing, the same as my Punjabi and Urdu plays, which give me ample scope for experimentation in language, theme and dramatisation and for savouring the rhythm and beat of Indian life. I write articles both serious and humorous for English newspapers and journals, anthologies and encylopaedias. At times, requests for such contributions have afforded me excellent oppportunities for extended reading, study and research into a new field. For instance two recent articles I wrote, one entitled "The Contemporaneousness of Baba Farid, "a savant who lived in the thirteenth century and the other on "Swami Ram Tirath," a man of religion and a teacher of the same vintage as Swami Vivekananda and Dayanand, gave me immense satisfaction. I write an occasional script in English and Punjabi and plays in English, Punjabi and Urdu for radio and television. There are monetary rewards, though paltry, for this kind of work.

Now about my other writing, for which I expect and receive no payment. This largely consists of book reviews and articles on topics relating to language, literature and the stage, mainly for Punjabi journals, but an odd one for an English or Urdu paper also. Very few Indian language papers pay their contributors because they think that seeing one's name in print is enough

compensation for a writer. Some writers are not in need of such gratification; yet they do permit the free use of theia talent and labour. In my own case, that is for two entirely different reasons. First. Indian language journals, particularly those with a literary slant, can barely manage to keep their head above water in the financial context. I, therefore, feel that they need to be helped to keep them going. The second reason is that when I feel strongly on a particular topic, the absence of monetary reward will not be a disincentive to keep me from expressing myself through the pages of a hospitable journal.

The second problem of a marginal writer, therefore is to divide the time that he has set apart for literary work between writing that pays and writing from which he expects no monetary award. At this stage the danger is that he may slowly slip into damnable reportage and magazine articles devoid of any aspiration except love of money and become a pen-pusher for whom writing, like any other vocation, is just a means of buttering his bread thick. But if his commitment to imaginative and intellectually strenous writing is sufficiently deep, he will make a conscious effort to avoid such a situation and that is the third problem of a marginal writer: a constant battle against filthy lucre, which in the long run dulls the sensibility.

Some may ask: what kind of writing is that for which a writer should expect no monetary award? That question will be sensible in the developed world where the percentage of literacy is high, the readership is large and books and magazines do not gather dust on the stands. But in our country when seventy adults out of a hundred cannot read or write and out of the other thirty, sixty per cent, that is, almost two thirds live below the poverty line, it is like begging the question. That leaves you about ten adults out of a hundred who may be expected to buy books, journals and newspapers. With the price of a daily being 35 paise the spending power of more than nine out of these ten is exhausted by the time they have paid their monthly newspaper bill. Thus the potential buyer of books and journals is a fraction of one out a hundred Indian adults.

This analysis may appear simplistic to some, but it is confirmed by some figures I shall now quote. The total number of books published in India during 1977-78 was under 20,000, which gives you one book in the course of a whole year for every 30 thousand Indians. Surprisingly half the books published were in the English language, which is read by a microscopic minority. If the books published in English are excluded, we are left with one book for every 60 thousand Indians. We can safely presume that out of 10,000 titles published in Indian languages, fifty per cent, and I think that is a modest estimate, will be failures in the sense that they will bring no return either to the publishers or their authors who will have to survive on the income from the remaining 5,000 titles. At this stage, the arithmetic of this exercise must take us into other relevant factors like prices, royalties, commissions and slush money that goes into the pockets of various kinds of buyers, libraries, government department etc. but in the context of what falls to the share of the author, all that is unnecessary, for he, poor man, does not get more than 10 per cent of the marked price and that too, if he is lucky.

With such low and uncertain return from writing, India can support very few fulltime writers. Here I am not considering textbook writers, whose work is of a mechanical nature, but creative writers. The majority of them earn their livelihood as shopkeepers, factory hands, salesman, traders, business executives, teachers and religious preachers. Writing for them is a pastime with a strong possibility of turning into a passion. At whatever stage of this pastime-to-passion journey they may be, they all belong to the vast fraternity of marginal writers,

INTRODUCING. . .

Even Author Mark Twain, American humorist, had problems with the Income tax authorities. The article that follows is a letter addressed by Mark Twain to the British Queen protesting (in a lighter vein) against the tax on the royalties earned on his book in Britain. Mark Twain may or may not have actually written the letter to the British Queen and it may not be anything more than a humorous piece of writing. The article however fully brings out the exasperating problems authors have to face in regard to the income tax levied on them on account of their royalties earned or not earned on their books. The letter is both instructive and entertaining. [*ED*]

A Petition to the Queen of England

Mark Twain

Hartford, Nov. 6, 1887

Madam: You will remember that last May Mr. Edward Bright the clerk of the Inland Revenue Office, wrote me about a tax which he said was due from me to the government on books of of mine published in London-that is to say, an income tax on the royalties. I do not know Mr. Bright, and it is embarrassing to me to correspond with strangers; for I was raised in the country and have always lived there, the early part in Marion Country, Missouri, before the war, and this part in Hartford County, Connecticut, near Bloomfield and about eight miles this side of Formington, though some call it nine, which it is impossible to be, for I have walked it many a time in considerably under three hours, and General Howley says he has done it in two and a quarter, which is not likely; so it has seemed best that I write your Majesty. It is true that I do not know your Majesty personally, but I have met the Lord Mayor, and if the rest of the family are like him, it is but just that it should be named royal; and likewise plain that in a family matter like this, I cannot better forward my case than to frankly carry it to the head of the family itself. I have also met the Prince of Wales once in the fall of 1873, but it was not in any familiar way, but in a quite informal way, being casual, and was, of course, a surprise to us both. It was in Oxford Street, just where you come out of Oxford into Regent Circus, and just as the turned up one side of the circle at the head of a procession, I went down the other side on the top of an omnibus. He will remember me on account of a gray coat with flap pockets that I wore, as I was the only person on the omnibus that had on that kind of a coat; I remember him of course as easy as I would a comet. He looked quite proud and satisfied, but that is not to be wondered at, he has a good situation And once I called on your Majesty, but you were out.

But that is no matter, it happens with everybody. However, I have wandered a little from what I started about. It was this way.

Young Bright wrote my London publishers, Chatto and Windus—their place is the one on the left as you come down Piccadilly, about a block and a half above where the minstrel show is—he wrote them that he wanted them to pay income tax on the royal ties of some foreign authors, namely, Miss De La Rame (Ouida), Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, Mr. Francis Bret Harte, and Mr. Mark Twain. Well, Mr. Chatto diverted him from the others, and tried to divert him from me, but in this case he failed. So then young Bright wrote me. And not only that, but he sent me a printed document the size of a newspaper, for me to sign all over in different places. Well, it was that kind of a document that the more you study it the more it undermines you and makes everything seem uncertain to you; and so, while in that condition, and really not responsible for my acts, I wrote Mr. Chatto to pay the tax and charge it to me. Of course my idea was that it was for only one year, and that the tax would be only about one per cent, or along there somewhere, but last night I met Professor Sloane of Princeton—you may not know him, but you have probably seen him every now and then, for he goes to England a good deal, a large man and very handsome and absorbed in thought, and if you have noticed such a man on platforms after the train is gone, that is the one, he generally gets left, like all those specialists and other scholars who know everything but not how to apply it—and he said it was a back tax for three years, and not one per cent, but two and half.

That what had seemed a little matter now has a new aspect. I then began to study the printed document again, to see if I could find anything in it that might modify my case, and I had what seems to be a quite promising success. For instance, it opens thus—polite and courteous, the way those English government documents always are—I do not say that to hear myself talk, it is just the fact, and it is a credit:

To Mr. Mark Twain; In pursuance of the Acts of Parliament for granting to Her Majesty Duties and Profits, etc.

I had not noticed that before. My idea had been that it was for the government, and so I wrote to the government; but now I saw that it was a private matter, a family matter, and that the

proceeds went to yourself, not the government. I would always rather treat with principals, and I am glad I noticed that clause. With a principal, one can always get at a fair and right understanding, whether it is about potatoes, or continents, or any of those things, or something entirely different; for the size or nature af the thing does not affect the fact; where-as, as a rule, a subordinate is more or less troublesome to satisfy. And yet this is not against them, but the other way. They have their duties to do, and must be harnessed to rules, and not allowed any discretion. Why, if your Majesty should equip young Bright with discretion—I mean his own discretion—it is an even guess that he would discretion you out of house and home in two or three years. He would not mean to get the family into straits, but that whould be the upshot, just the same. Now then, with Bright out of the way, this is not going to be any Irish question; it is going to be settled pleasantly and satisfactorily for all of us, and when it is finished your Majesty is going to stand with the American people just as you have stood for fifty years, and surely no monarch can require better than that of an alien nation. They do not all pay a British income tax, but the most of them will in time, for we have shoals of new authors coming along every year; and of the population of your Canada, upward of four fifths are wealthy Americans and more going there all the time.

Well, another thing which I noticed in the Document was an item about "deductions" I will come to that presently, your Majesty. And another thing was this: that Authors are not mentioned in the Document at all. No, we have quarries, Mines, Ironworks, Salt springs, Alum mines, waterworks, Canals, Docks, Drains, Levels, Fishings, Fairs, Tolls, Bridges, Ferries, and so forth and so forth and so on—well, as much as a yard or a yard and a half of them, I should think—anyway very largs quantity or number. I read along—down and down, and down the list, further, and further, and further, and as I approached the bottom my hopes began to rise higher and higher, because I saw that everything in England that far was taxed by name and in detail, except perhaps the family, and may be Parliament, and yet still no mention of Authors. Apparently

they were going to be overlooked. And sure enough, they were. My heart gave a great bound. But I was too soon. There was a footnote in Mr. Bright's hand, which said: You are taxed under Schedule D, section 14. I turned to that place, and found these three things, Traders, Offices, Gasworks.

Of course, after a moment's reflection, hope came up again. and then certainty: Mr. Bright was in error, and clear off the track; for Authorship is not a Trade, it is an inspiration. Authorship does not keep an Office, its habitation is all out under the sky, and everywhere where the winds are blowing and the sun is shining and the creatures of God are free. Now then. since I have no Trade and keep no Office, I am not taxable under Schedule D, section 14. Your Majesty sees that; so I will go on to that other thing that I spokc of, the "deductions"—deductions from my tax which I may get allowed, under conditions. Mr. Bright says all deductions to be claimed by me must be restricted to the provisions made in Paragraph No. 8. entitled Wear and Tear of Machinery, or Plant, This is curious, and shows how far he has gotten away on his wrong course after once he has got started wrong: for Offices and Trades do not have Plants, they do not have Machinery, such a thing was never heard of; and, more over, they do not wear and tear. You see that, your Majesty, and that it is true. Here is the paragraph No. 8:

Amount claimed as a deduction for diminished value by reason of Wear and Tear, where the Mechinery or Plant belongs to the Person or Company carrying on the Concern, if is let to such Person or Company so that the Lessee is bound to maintain and deliver over the same in good condition:

Amount £_____

There it is—the very words.

I could answer Mr. Bright thus;

It is my pride to say that my Brain is my Plant: and I do not claim any deduction for diminished value by reason of Wear and

Tear, for the reason that it does not wear and tear, but stays sound and whole all the time. Yes, I could say to him, my Brain is my Plant, my Skull is my Workshop, my Hand is my Machinery, and I am the Person carrying on the Concern; it is not leased to anybody, and so there is no Lessee bound to maintain and deliver over the same in good condition. There. I do not wish to any way overrate this argument and answer, dashed off just so, and not a word of it altered from the way I first wrote it, your Majesty. but indeed it does seem to pulverize your fellow, you can see that yourself. But that is all I say, I stop there; I never pursue a person after I heve got him down.

Having thus shown your Majesty that I am not taxable, but am the victim of the error of a clerk who mistakes the nature of my commerce, it only remains for me to beg that you will of your justice annul the letter that I spoke of, so that my publisher can keep back that tax money which, in the confusion and aberration caused by the Document, I ordered him to pay. You will not miss the sum, but this is a hard year for authors; and as for lectures, I do not suppose your Majesty ever saw such a dull season.

With always great and ever-increasing respect, I beg to sign myself your Majesty's servant to command,

MARK TWAIN

To Her Majesty the Queen, London.

[From the **Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg** and Other Essays, Stories, first published in book form 1898.]

SHAH ABDUL LATIF-THE PHILOSOPHER FOLK-POET OF SIND-1689-1751

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The elite do not make a country. The folk do it And if literature is any guide to the understanding of a country, the folk-tales tell a true story and have precedence in the same order as heart has over head. Head thinks. And thinking is a process. It takes its own time. Heart is an instant expression. It is a sort of an on-the-spot assessment of the real worth of a man. Unlike head, heart does not play the game of hide-and-seek. Intellectual gymnastics is the privilege of the head. Emotional out-burst of truth is of the heart.

Heart is the strong citadel of Cupid-the god of Love. The folk literature feeds fat and gleefully gloats on this luxurious menu of man and woman feasting or fasting, fastened or loosened in a lock. One wants to make one's leisure hours interesting and entertaining. And the affairs of the heart—a love story with physical overtones—fill the hours with pleasure, because they come closer to one's life as one lives it, day in and day out. Folk literature is, therefore, popular literature.

The Sindhi folk literature is no exception. The couples predominating the love scene are Sausee-Punhoo; Moomal-Rano; Leela-Chanesar; Umar-Mauree; Suhani-Mehar; Noori Jam Tamachi and Sorath Rai Dayach. They are seven in number. Beautiful narrations they of love mundane—a common theme, a usual triangular park play. These folk tales were popular with the people making the rural side the back-bone of a country.

Shah Abdul Latif, the sage poet of Sind, 1689—1751, worked upon these Sindhi folk tales with over tones over tuned. Emphasis shifted from the physical to the meta-physical aspect of the life of Man, the story being kept intact. Shah, thus, very aptly, while retaining the entertaining virtues of the tales, injected the instructive purpose of the mission of man on Earth as the seeker after

Truth. Moral inducted in relevant parts is as attractive and persuasive as the story itself. The two aspects. the meta-physical and the physical, are lovelaced as the theme and the illustration, after the manner, as though of the teachings in the Bhagavad Gita in the form of Adhyas, chapters containing the theme and the Mahatams the illustration.

This is what distinguishes Shah as one among the nine pearl poets who adorned the court of the Lady Literature of the pre-conquest period ending 1843, the year of the British conquest of Sind. They were Kazi Kauzan of Sehwar, acknowledged as the first Sindhi poet, the senior trio of Sayyed Abdul Karim, Sayyed Anayat Allah, Shah Abdul Latif, all of Hyderabad District; the junior trio of Soofi Dalpat of Sehwan, Sachal Sarmast of Shah Daraz, Khairpur Mirs State, Rohal Rind Fakir of Kandri Rohri and Soofi Bedal, Fohri, and Sami Chainrai of Shikarpur. They all were distinguished spokesmen of the word of God conveyed to man for the salvation of his soul. Comparison is an exercise in futility and is odious, albeit inevitable. Shah stands out. The extra mark of distinction is his style and the divine breath he infuses in the folk tales as the food for his thoughts. He is endowed with a gift divine to work wonders with the physical amorous features of the folk tales to serve his purpose, metaphysical.

The folk tales are so many pads to take off for a flight unto the unseen vastness in search of the Creator. And as required by the situation, the actors interchange their roles. woman becomes the seeker and man the one much sought after entity divine.

And this, not just for the fun of it. It is the secret of the existence of the creation. God is the creator. And God cannot be analysed as a feminine gender. He is a male. There should be the opposite number. It can only be the created being as the feminine gender. And love is an attribute which graces a female more than it doth a male. So, apart from mythical considerations that there be, the preference signifies a natural analysis of a happy and healthy physical form of love which the state of a devotee represents, love-sick for the love-lord.

Life is a struggle. It is the game of tug-of-war played by God and Satan set against one another. Man is wooed. But the wooing is with a difference. Man is the prize. But the option is with him, either to shield the godly glow in him and attain the true stature; or the satanic twilight and be damned and lead the life of a moral dwarf, disgraced and denounced.

Man is taking the test. A servant must play to the tune of the master. And as his originator is God, the key is switched on to the tune to sing a song :

"Put off the light
By evil hand ignited
Keep the blaze bright
By the gracious Hand lighted."

To answer this assignment, the tales are arranged in the order shown :

(1) Moomal—Rano
(2) Leela —Chanesar
(3) Umar —Mauree
(4) Noori —Jam Tamachi
(5) Shoni —Mehar
(6) Sausee —Punhoo
(7) Sorath —Rai Dayach

God is classified as omni-present and indivisible shakti. To signify this stature of God, Shah has commissioned the folk tale of Moomal Rano. It is shown how Moomal erred in duplicating Rano in the form of Soomal, her sister, and suffered. This is the take off point. The story proceeds to narrate the determination of Moomal, the seeker, to find out Rano and seek forgiveness and re-conciliation. While on this flight, truth dawns and the dark clouds of ignorance disperse when Moomal says : Where to drive the camel ! " There is moon-shine all around. All that meets the eye is the projected vision of Rana". This is the realization of the truth that God is omnipresent; and that it is His breath that pervades all creation. She also realized her error at the initial stage of having incurred the displeasure of Rana by dividing her atten-

tion between Rano, the real and the only one, and Soomal, the faked one. Then Moomal lived at peace with herself and the flight came to a successful halt after traversing the run-way.

How to live this Truth in every day life is the theme of the four folk tales of Leela Chanesar, Umer Mauree, Noori Jam Tamachi and Sohini Mehar. A devotee must, in a marked degree, possess the virtues of abstinence, reverence and faith.

Chanesar was the king and Leela was the queen. It was a happy married couple. For our purpose it was a situation of Man living in peace with God. But then gold came in between and turned the tables upside down. Leela is the symbol of the evil of much wanting more, Konroo was the daughter of Rana Khanghar of the neighbouring kingdom of Kutch. To win her bet to have Chanesar as her consort, she staked her all; and knowing the weakness of Leela for gold, she threw the bait of a diamond lace unsurpassed in beauty to Leela in exchange for just one night to share the bed with Chanesar. Leela succumbed to her weakness. The adverse end was inevitable. Chanesar finding a stranger in his bed was all wrath. Leela was disowned and dethroned.

Umar Mauree follows the opposite number. Mauree was a village girl of Malir. A very beautiful daughter of a farmer. Umar was the lord of the land. He kidnapped her to be his lady of love. She vowed to die fasting rather than be seduced by the prospects of happy luxurious life. She had been engaged to a farmer of her village. She perferred to live with him. She led a life of complete abstinence not even lighting the lamp in the castle of Umar. In the end, Umar yielded and restored her back to her parents. Between themselves, the two tales tell how to answer the call—

"Put off the evil lights
And with God be reconciled."

The stories of Sohni-Mehar and Noori-Jam Tamachi are lessons in the virtues of faith and humbleness—two arms are required to safely cross and reach the other bank where the eternal light beckoneth a seeker after Truth.

Sohni was in love with Mehar, her paramour. He lived across the river. She. used to visit him every night, negotiating the water of the river, Chunab, in the Punjab with the help of a well baked earthen Jar. She was a blot on her family. Shah takes off at this point. Hc asks Sohni to give-up the jar; for it is an evidence of want of faith in the intentions of her paramour to come to her succour in the event of difficulties. But Sohni replied that the jar was the means at her disposal to swim across the river and it was because of the jar that she could meet her love and enjoy life. With a desire to get rid of Sohni, her sister-in-law had replaced the jar with an un-baked one. Sohni not knowing that, took the jar and entered the waters. As was expected, the jar gave way and Sohni started sinking. At this point, Snah hails Sohni and tells her that it was a good omen. Union was guaranteed now that the jar which was a hindrance was removed. And it came true. When Sohni cried for help, Mehar went running and in an effort to save her, both found the common watery grave. Till then, she was parading a march between hey household and the land of the lord of her heart—not a disirable way of leading life in love.

Noori is the embodiment of the virtues of reverence and humbleness. One is not to look big like an elephant to attract the attention of God. But one should rather look small like an ant to sift a grain of sugar from the sandy vast and live a healthy life of love divine. Noori was a fisherman's daughter. Jam Tamacoi was the lord of the land. He took her to wife. The newly wed bride was an eye-sore to the other queens who hailed from high royal caste. To settle the issue once and for all, the king asked the queens to dress themselves the best way possible, and the chosen one would be rewarded with a honey-moon drive in the evening. All the queens, except Noori, donned guady colourful garments to give their bodies a show-piece look. But Noori did not change either her dress or the manner to mark the day as of any un-usual significance and awaited her lord's appearance with a lovely look of expectation in her eyes made ten-fold enticing with modesty. She won the bet and ever afterwards enjoyed the exclusive attention of Jam Tamachi.

The lesson to learn is :

"The low to the high are raised
When the ego in one low is laid
And dancing to the tune of child-like innocence
Shall one breathe the breath of Holy Existence."

The twin virtues of faith and humbleness revolve round the virtue of resignation to the will of God—a note of consolation on axis called the which ends the tale of the massacre of the Imams on the battle-field of Karbla.

"But weep and wail for the Imams
However hard one may
God by His will since the dawn
Had woven this woeful tale."

Resignation to the will of God is an act of surrender with honour. No stigma of weakness or inertia is implied much less attached. There is a subtle difference between the virtues of faith and resignation. Resignation is the expression of a state of mind which accepts events in life with a cheer, as they come and go, be they sour or sweet. This state of mind is the foundation stone on which is raised the grand edifice of faith with confidence. And at the root of both is the virtue of reverence. It is the mind soaked in the virtue of reverence which is the soil for the growth of the virtues of faith and resignation.

There are two more folk-tales of Sausie-Punhoo and Sorath-Rai Dayach. They are exercises in the high abstract philosophy of the Divinity that is the Man, as distinct from Man as the shadow of God and the Absolute beyond the Trinity which is the phenomenon called the creation.

The story, in short, is that Punhoo belonged to the royal family of Ketch Makran in Balochistan. And Sausie was the daughter of a washerman living in village Bhambhor near Karachi in Sind. It was a trade centre. Sausie was a beautiful village girl. The tale about her beauty reached the ears of Punhoo who came as a trader to Bhambhor. Love is blind. And Punhoo, un-mindful

of the caste system and culture contracted the marriage against the will of his parents. Man is the seeker. Prince of Makran became a washerman. The brothers of Punhoo then plotted. They visited the couple and assumed an air of reconciliation. Sausee trcated them to a sumptuous feast and retired to bed in peace and plenty of joy. In the morning she woke up to bemoan the loss of Punhoo who had been kidnapped and taken away.

The first part of the lesson taught is that one cannot have both, the pleasure of sleep and the company of God. The plain meaning is that one should be ever vigilant. But the deeper lesson is the futility of wandering in the wilderness in search of God. Sausie grew restless and started alone to reach the home-land of Punhoo to bring him back and live with him in peace.

Lost in the thick of the woods and face to face with the terrifying high mountains and roaring rivers, the feminine frail frame of Sausie was completely exhausted. Shah the spiritual reveller seizes the opportunity to turn the story to serve his purpose divine which is that it is futile to wander in the woods in search of God. Truth dawns on Sausie to know that she herself was Punhoo.

The screen of ignorance was removed. She buried the vision of the twins which is that Man is Divinity; and therefore it was an exercise in ignorance to reuoudce the world to announce union with God.

Shah strikes a strange note in this story of Sausee-Punhoo. He accuses Sausie of being squinteyed. When there is only one, she sees three. This evidently has a reference to the brothers of Punhoo whom Sausie accuses of being a third party which drove a wedge between her and Punhoo. When, as Shah would put it, it was Sausie to blame all along. She enjoyed sleep. In that lapse-hour she lost Punhoo. She loved to wander in the wood to seek him, when she herself was Punhoo. So for good or bad situations, thhre is no third party to blame. There is no second either. It is Man and Man alone. In a way Shah suggests that Man is divinity in all respects complete. Trinity is a whim and a whisper in the wilderness meaning nothing and in no way convincing.

In the story of Sorath-Rai Dayach, Shah soars high skyiork-like to vision the creation, a Trinity phenomenon and the Absolute beyond.

Rai Dayach is the story which demonstrates the theory of the unconcerned Absolute and the vanishing creation which is always understood in the context of the inter-play of the three forces named Brahma, the Creator, Vishnu, the Preserver, and Mahesh, the Destroyer. Thus there is the game of the quadruples, the Absolute and the perishable combination of the three.

In the story of Rai Dayach, there are four principal characters, three heroes and one heroine. They are, Ani Rai, the King of Gujarat, Rai Dayach, the King of Jhunagarh, Sorath, the daughter of Ani Rai, abducted by Rai Dayach, and Bijal who was commanded by Ani Rai, and assigned the ugly errant of beheading the King, Rai Dayach. In the sequel, all the three met the common fate of being devoured by the flames on a single pier and reduced to ashes in one heap. But the King, Ani Rai, who worked this tragedy, remained.

How? is the question? There is only one answer. And it is. that Sorath was the daughter of Ani Rai, metaphysically liked to Maya, the creation of the Absolute. Changes overtake the Creation not the Absolute. Creation is subject to decay and destruction. The Absolute is absolute, indefinable.

Shah further treats us to the two intrinsically basic values of life on spiritual plane. And they are:

(1) The mutually supporting vision of duality, very indispenable for the initiate; and

(2) The divinity that is the Man—a stage where the duality vision has out-grown its utility and purpose.

The dialogue between Bijal and Rai Dayach is meaningful and instructive. Strange are the ways of Shah. Bijal was commissioned to put Rai Dayach to death. But before he does put the plan into execution, he plays well the part of a Murnhid, a spiritual guide.

He tells Rai Dayach that Man is the secret of God, and God is the secret of Man. To know the one is to know the other. This is a healthy consciousness of the duality precept. But, he also tells him, that he must know his potentials. He must read the four lettered word, Ahmd, a name, by dropping the letter 'm' when it reads as 'Ahd' means the limitless. He drops the droppings of the duality which has limitations, and knows the naked truth that Man is the limitless divinity.

Then what is the Absolute? The absolute is un-born the indefinible, whatever may be the context, limited or un-limited. Man is endowed with unbound potentials. But still he carries a name. The Absolute cannot be named. The Absolute is formless and, therefore, nameless. Shah visualises the Invisible in the Ramkali Love and for the sake of convenience calls him 'Yogi' and bows before him in all reverence. Sachal Sarmast, the accredited heir to the wealth of the thoughts of Shah Abdul Latif on divinity that dwells in Man, calls him "Fakir" who defies all attempt at description in terms of limited or un-limited liability.

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story; the narcotics squad in America which is in the pay of not only Government but of every one in the ring plans the assassination of Vishnu which he manages in true American style in full view of nationwide T V viewers—a la the Kennedy assassination. But Vishnu has provided for it by substituting for himself a Hollywood actor and staying in the background.

When the IRS men and narcotics squad move in for the kill and Kelly's first helper is taken away by the police the end of the world occurs dramatically with Vishnu riding a white horse in puranic tradition and then dancing the Siva dance of death on a barge in the river. In breath taking sequences the story moves forward to an unexpected culmination. Vishnu and his beloved move in to the White House in an uninhabited America and the others go for jaunts in the world which is also uninhabited. They help themselves to all the riches of the world—there is none to question them. Lakshmi is pregnant now and she has to produce a series of children who would now repopulate the world. But Vishnu has calculated things without the due cognisance of human perfidy; the Doctor who has claimed that he was incapable of producing children is in love with Lakshmi and it transpires that though he has said to the contrary, Lakshmi and Vishnu are incompatible and they cannot produce healthy children; this is the second climax in the story very effectively worked out. Vishnu rises to the occasion. " As Rama I kill this rival to the affections of my Sita, Lakshmi" and he kills him. Lakshmi dies of despair. The new world cannot now be born for both women left are sterile and Vishnu himself is sterile. But the aviatrix has cultivated a couple of monkeys and they beget their children and in them lies the hope of a new world.

Intellectually, scientifically, psychologically this in a very convincing novel, brilliantly explicated in spite of the many improbabilities. The lack of realism in content is offset by a realistic method of telling the story through the mind and eyes of a modern avitarix who is intellectually very competent. Time was when only astrologers where concerned with the future but now we are witnessing a generation of futurologists drawn from various sciences and disciplines not least from the physical and industrial and social sciences. Gore Vidal makes use of all of them with wise restraint. Romantically sighing for the world to change in Rubiayat fashion is not likely to be of any help; the moralist is faced with a problem when saving humanity tantamount to making permanent ageold injustices–man's inhumanity to man. It is perhaps good that the world should end and a new world begin in its place. It is this problem of the present day moralist that Gore Vidal has posed in this novel with subtle irony, with effective skill and

excellent use of the Hindu puranic myths. That it has an element of the thriller is perhaps a sign of the times; it presents the metaphysics in a new context and a wholly convincing situation. The implied criticism of the rulers of the world is quite obvious, including some references of Indira Gandhi. The aviatrix author claims that she suffered in the U S context for having applauded Srimathy Indira Gandhi for having castrated the greatest number of men who deserved castration in the shortest time. I have a healthy suspicion that the author was talking not of the physucal act of castration but of the castration of her Cabinet. It is this irony that is precious to me in Gore Vidal's writings and I enjoyed it as I enjoyed his mastery of the puraric content of the Hindu myths and thier explication.

Ka Naa Subramanyam

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